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COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards

Specialized Section on Standardization of
Seed Potatoes

Thirty-third session, 26-28 March 2003, Geneva

Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda

MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING SINCE THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION

Note by the secretariat

Note by the secretariat: This document sums up the relevant outcome of the sixth session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development and the fifty-eighth session of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development. It also contains a summary report of the meeting of rapporteurs held in Canada from 30 September to 4 October 2002.

A. SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The following excerpt is taken from the report of the Committee (ECE/TRADE/300, paragraphs 46 to 52):

Item 10 – Agricultural quality standards

Documentation:

TRADE/2002/8

Summary of WP.7 progress achieved since the November 2001 session

TRADE/WP.7/2001/9

Report of the fifty-seventh session of the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development (WP.7)

46. The Secretary to the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development (WP.7) presented documents TRADE/2002/8 and TRADE/WP.7/2001/9. As additional information to the revised and new standards listed in these documents, he reported that during the last year a number of standards had been updated to adapt them to new trade practices. New standards for pineapples and ovine carcasses and cuts were close to completion. A solution to the mentioning of trade marks in UNECE Standards had been adopted and work on the review of the Geneva Protocol (which defines the context of the Standards) and the harmonization of produce coding had started.

47. The Committee had, at previous sessions, discussed possible support by UNECE for the work on explanatory brochures which is currently done under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Scheme. The secretariat reported that, at present, the UNECE was not able to allocate the additional resources necessary for undertaking this work to the Agricultural Standards Unit, but that the cooperation with the OECD Scheme functioned very well.

48. A seminar on Safe and High-quality Food for International Trade had been co-organized on 4 and 5 April 2002 in New Delhi by the UNECE with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and EAN India, at the invitation of the Government of India. The seminar had focused on building the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises to apply international standards and participate in international supply chains. The seminar was well received and it is planned to organize a follow-up event in 2003 in Bangkok together with ESCAP and, possibly, further seminars, one of which could be in a central Asian member State of the UNECE.

49. The delegation of the European Community said that it continued to consider the UNECE work on agricultural standards as very important and relevant. Many EC standards within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy are based on these UNECE standards. The delegation also indicated its encouragement for making the standards better known in other parts of the world. It noted the excellent cooperation with the FAO and the OECD Scheme. However, it hoped that it would be possible for UNECE to support the development of explanatory brochures to speed up this work in the future.

50. The delegation of Switzerland said that the work of WP.7 and its specialized sections was a positive example of how the UNECE and the Committee could make a contribution that was recognized in international trade.

51. The delegation of the Russian Federation thanked the Chairman of WP.7, Mr. Vilchez-Barros, for his contribution to UNECE work on agricultural standards, which had helped WP.7 become a global forum in this area, with participation of experts from all continents. He particularly stressed the importance for his country of the standards for seed potatoes and meat and the use of UNECE agricultural standards in negotiations with trading partners. He also expressed the wish to see more operational work by the UNECE secretariat, i.e. the organization of training courses on how to apply the standards.

52. The Committee **endorsed** TRADE/WP.7/2001/9 and **noted** TRADE/2002/8. The points raised by the European Community and the Russian Federation would be discussed by the WP.7 bureau.

B. 58TH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON STANDARDIZATION OF PERISHABLE PRODUCE AND QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Note by the secretariat: Please note that the Working Party decided to change its name to “Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards”.

The following excerpt is taken from the report of the Working Party (see TRADE/WP.7/2002/9, paras. 66 to 71)

ITEM 5: Specialized Section on Standardization of Seed Potatoes

Document: *TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2002/15 (Report of the 32nd session)*

66. The Chairman of the Specialized Section, Mr. Giacomo Bianchi (Italy), informed the Working Party of the outcome of the thirty-second session of the Specialized Section as well as two extended bureau meetings which took place in France and Canada. He thanked the French and Canadian authorities for their invitation and the organization of these meetings and regretted that the UNECE secretariat had not been able to participate due to insufficient travel funds.

67. At the meeting of the Specialized Section, among other items, a major proposal to amend the Standard was agreed. This amendment concerned the introduction of international classes, subdividing the categories of pre-basic, basic and certified seed. This had been discussed for several years and was aimed at combining the two main systems currently used: classification into categories and field generations. It is believed that the amendment will contribute to more transparency in international trade and also allow countries to have an international reference for their national classes.

68. He reported that during the session the group had the opportunity to clarify with a representative of WTO that the Standard considers issues falling under the WTO-TBT agreement as well as the WTO-SPS agreement. The WTO-TBT agreement encourages members to use international standards but only mentions principles and good practices for standardization without recommending any specific standard setting organization. Organizations can be recognized as international standard-setting bodies if they are open to all WTO members.

69. Other work currently discussed in the Specialized Section and the bureau concerned:

- a new introduction to the standard
- the publication of the results of the questionnaire on national certification schemes
- the concept of variety (including GMO)
- a definition of national designated authority (NDA) and its responsibility in the implementation of the Standard
- harmonization of test methods
- a UNECE label
- field tolerances for viruses
- a list of pests to be checked on the nuclear (or initial) stock of pre-basic seed
- a list of pests of concern to seed potatoes
- visual aids for annex VIII for assessing the tuber surface area coverage of blemish diseases
- a new annex with a summary table of tolerances.

70. The next Bureau meeting is scheduled 21-22 November 2002 in Geneva in order to finalize the publication of national certification schemes and to prepare the next Specialized Section scheduled for 6 to 8 March 2003, just after the early and ware potato meeting, to allow experts to attend both meetings.

71. The Working Party adopted the text proposed in document TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2002/15/Add.1 as a revised UNECE Standard, noting some corrections to countries' reservations in annex IV. The text will be published in Addendum 16 to this report (TRADE/WP.7/2002/9/Add.16).

C. SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE EXTENDED BUREAU 30 SEPTEMBER TO 4 OCTOBER 2002 IN MONTEBELLO, QUEBEC, CANADA

Aim of meeting was to review and revise papers to be presented for discussion and approval at the specialized section meeting in Geneva and to generate a list of new initiatives to be worked on for next meeting

An initial discussion was raised by the United States concerning the EU marketing directive and the effect of its interpretation on seed potato shipments within and outside of EU. Questions were raised concerning the continuity between the UNECE standard and the Directive for possible further discussion the Specialized Section meeting.

1. *Review of the new Introduction: 3.2 Goal and scope:* Concerns were expressed concerning goals and limitations of the standard. The text was amended. The main goal is to act as world standard. Certain quality pests were deleted. It was questioned if "Creating a harmonized certification system- promoting its use" is truly a world requirement. There was a discussion on the application of the standard in a trade setting. Concerning IPPC, NAPPO and EPPO it was discussed what jurisdiction and authority applies.
2. *Requirements: Quarantine vs Quality:* It was stressed that the group is free to identify what aspects of certification the standard will cover. The meaning of the term "genealogy" and its connection to traceability were questioned. The text was revised to combine both. Concerning plant health aspects it was agreed to amend the requirement to Diseases and Pest and remove plant health aspects. The indent concerning "physiology and external quality" was amended to "External quality and physiology".
3. *Concept of National Designation Authority:* Discussion and agreement that the NDA is the body which is responsible for certification rather than for the implementation of the standard.
4. *4.0 Application of the standard: Export/ Import:* Are both aspects accepted for by the parameters

covered by the standard? The question was raised to the integrity and merits of this claim at both point of entry and export. This is based on the fact that the standard has a rider which contradicts this intent. The use of the provision "A country may apply additional or more stringent the requirements" seriously undermines the intent and the integrity of practical application and acceptance of the standard. The introduction was revised to reflect this discussion. (concerning paras. 1. to 4. see TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2003/3).

5. *Concept of variety*: Discussion and agreement on wording to be proposed for introduction of the revised text into the standard (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2003/8).
6. Pests to be checked on the mother tuber. Discussion and agreement on proposed text. (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2003/4).
7. *Pest and disease list*: Discussion on the relevance and applicability. Proposal to amend the columns to exclude the symptom expression on plants and tubers category. Paper to be revised and prepared for next meeting. (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2003/9).
8. *Annex VIII*: Rename and amend Annex VIII to Assessment Key for percentage tuber surface area coverage of blemish diseases (e.g., Common scab, black scurf and powdery scab) We would like 1% , 10% and 33.3%. Include new images, 3 images per percentage area coverage. (see TRADE/WP.7/GE.6/2003/6).
9. *Analysis of the questionnaire*: The title was changed to An Overview of National Schemes for Seed Potato Certification. The Questionnaire needs a general introductory section to explain what its aims and objectives are: to summarize current seed potato certification scheme information worldwide to provide a platform for harmonization. The following text is suggested:

“ *New introduction*

In order to update the present overview of seed potato certification systems previously compiled in 1985 a questionnaire was developed by the UN/ECE specialized section on the standardization of seed potatoes and sent to 75 countries with an interest in seed potatoes.

This overview is a compilation of answers received from certification authorities. The role of the UNECE secretariat has been to compile the data.

The aim of the compilation is to provide up to date information on National seed potato certification schemes to increase the understanding of individual schemes and encourage harmonization. The overall objective is to facilitate trade in seed potatoes worldwide.

The UN secretariat is not responsible for the accuracy of the data, and interested parties should contact national authorities to confirm the current status of certification requirements.”

10. In the table of contents “Indications” was renamed “An Explanation of Data Presented”.
11. Footnotes: It is recommended that the word “no response” or, “no” or “yes” is inserted in the table.
12. It is intended to hold a bureau meeting to further prepare the questionnaire for presentation to the specialized section and future publication and distribution.
13. New work proposed :
 - To include tables of summary tolerances for annexes II, III, IV.
 - Recommended best tuber handling practices for shipper/receiver.
 - Discussion on the applicability of destination tuber tolerances.
 - To develop an Index to the Standard.